

# LOVECRAFT STUDIES 8



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# LOVECRAFT STUDIES

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*This issue of Lovecraft Studies is  
dedicated to George T. Wetzel,  
who passed away this winter.  
He was for many years a  
leading Lovecraft Scholar.*  
Cover by Jason Eckhardt

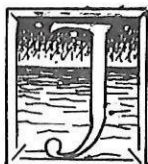
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# DEMYTHOLOGIZING CTHULHU

by Robert M. Price



ust how seriously did H. P. Lovecraft mean us to take his Cthulhu Mythos? How seriously did he take it himself? Was his use of the "Great Old Ones" and their terrors merely some kind of stage setting, something "he chanced to mould in play"? Or were the blasphemies of the *Necronomicon* actually nightmares haunting Lovecraft, to which his fiction was the nervous response of a "whistler in darkness"? Of late, these theories have made the rounds among fans and scholars of Lovecraft's work. Both alike are unsatisfying. Cthulhu and his cousins are surely more than stylistic accessories. Yet equally certainly, Lovecraft does not seem to have so taken leave of his senses as to have actually given credence to the monsters of his imagination. Perhaps surprisingly, the answer to this dilemma is to be found in the "demythologizing" hermeneutic of New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann. To anticipate, Lovecraft's tales of the Great Old Ones are real myths, and thus to be taken seriously but not literally.

The debate as to the intent and nature of the Cthulhu cycle strikingly parallels the contest that raged over the miracle stories of the gospels, beginning with Lessing's publication of the *Fragments* of Hermann Samuel Reimarus between 1774 and 1778. For centuries, apologists for the Christian faith had relied on the so-called "proofs from prophecy and miracle" to convince unbelievers. If Jesus could be demonstrated to have fulfilled Old Testament prophecies and to have worked supernatural miracles, then any rational person should acquiesce to his claims to have been the Messiah and the Son of God. Such a convincing case could only be made, of course, as long as all parties assumed that the gospel texts recording his words and deeds were composed by eyewitnesses, and thus contemporaneous with what they described.<sup>1</sup>

Reimarus pointed out numerous indications within the texts that they were not in fact accurate. Among these were the presence of divergent understandings (political vs. spiritual) of the "Kingdom of God" preached by Jesus, and embarrassing contradictions among the resurrection narratives. Reimarus and other rationalist critics after him thus rejected the Christian apologists' claim that the gospels were historically accurate. But they did not think to question the twin claim that the texts were eyewitness accounts. The seemingly inevitable conclusion was that the wonder tales of the gospels were delib-

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<sup>1</sup>Substantially the same arguments are set forth today in several works, for instance John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1974); Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernadino: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1973).



erate lies, intended to capture the allegiance of the gullible. Now this would not have been out of the question. Such "pious (and not so pious) frauds" have always been present in religious history. The second-century satirist Lucian chronicles a famous instance in his "Alexander the Quack Prophet", wherein one Alexander of Ablonuticus establishes a phony oracle, a large snake wearing a mask resembling a human face, and set back from the crowds in the shadows. Alexander collected considerable revenue from the manufactured marvel, and even sent out apostles to advertise the new god to more prospective customers! In our own day, the clever hoax-miracles of Reverend Jim Jones provide a parallel. (For instance, the late Jeannie Mills, once an advisor to Jones, recounted to this writer how Jones engineered walking on water!)

Nonetheless, the supernatural stories of Jesus in the New Testament do not seem to fall in this category. David Friedrich Strauss, in his epoch-making *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835), broke the "hoax or history" deadlock by indicating a third possibility. He simply pointed out that the common assumption of apologists and skeptics, that the gospels were the product of eyewitnesses, was erroneous. Instead, several considerations led to the conclusion that the texts represented the legend-mongering propensity of first- and second-generation religious enthusiasts who had themselves witnessed little or nothing of the activities of their founder. Pious imagination, not cynical deception, was the determinative factor.

But so what? Wasn't the whole enterprise debunked either way? Orthodox apologists thought so, and thus resisted Strauss' conclusion. Strauss himself, on the other hand, was sure that the gospel story of Jesus' incarnation, miracles, and resurrection did enshrine an important truth—the essential unity of humanity and God. This truth, and adjacent ones, were presented in the New Testament in pictorial form. The important thing for our purposes is that Strauss had indicated that myth, even if not *literally* true, may be true in an important sense nevertheless. It remained for others to describe more accurately the way in which myth serves to communicate truth. In the present century, the work of two scholars in particular stands out. E. R. Dodds and Rudolf Bultmann moved beyond Strauss, rejecting the "intellectualist bias" present in his view of myth.

Anthropologists James Frazer and Edward Tylor in their theories of the origins of religion from magic and animism, respectively, had imagined primitive man as a kind of early theorist, positing explanations (magic, etc.) for natural phenomena. Even so, Strauss envisioned the early Christians as setting forth philosophical abstractions in mythical terms. Dodds and Bultmann realized instead that myth was an unconscious representation (via externalizing projection) of one's conception of his manner of existence in the world. In his famous essay "New Testament and Mythology", Bultmann argued at length that

The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially. Myth speaks of

the power or the powers which man supposes he experiences as the ground and limit of his world and of his own activity and suffering.<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to describe how the New Testament sees the existence of man as dominated by evil "powers" (demons and evil angels) whose power he can never hope to resist by himself. E. R. Dodds in his *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* shows this pessimistic perspective to have been endemic in the Mediterranean world at this time. This perception might have been expressed in terms of disparate religious mythologies or philosophical world-views, but the underlying sense of guilt, anxiety, and frustration was pretty much the same.

"The whole world lieth in [the grasp of] the Evil One," says the author of the First Epistle of John; it is "the dominion of fear and terror, the place of distress, with desolation," according to a psalm from Qumran; it is "the totality of wickedness," according to a pagan Hermeticist; for the Gnostic Heracleon it is a desert peopled only by wild beasts; in the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* it is a realm of nightmare in which "either one flees one knows not where, or else one remains inert in pursuit of one knows not whom."<sup>3</sup>

The key to all these dreary cosmological visions is that "they are very largely an hypostatisation, a dreamlike projection, of their authors' inner experience."<sup>4</sup>

Basically, people found themselves, in their everyday existence, to be at bay—confronted with a snapping pack of disasters including "barbarian invasions, bloody civil wars, recurrent epidemics, galloping inflation and extreme personal insecurity."<sup>5</sup> Where could they turn for relief? If their subconscious had projected their fears in the form of demonic "powers", it also provided redemptive hope, assuming the form of various salvation schemes. The hope of astrology, oracles, and dream interpretation was that even if one could not divert the blows of Fate, at least one might roll with the punches if he were forewarned. The "mystery cults" of Serapis, Isis, Mithras, and others promised actual deliverance from the power of Fate. Gnosticism supplied its adherents with the secret knowledge to slip past the evil archons keeping mankind prisoner in this dark vale of tears.<sup>6</sup> And of course Christ was depicted as "having disarmed the powers and authorities . . . , triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

<sup>2</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>See Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).



For moderns, the proper response to this mythology is not to reject or subtract it, but rather to "demythologize", i.e. interpret it. For, though the myths may be factually untenable, the self-understanding, the view of existence in the world, may still merit our attention. The "demonic powers" may find their counterparts in today's ideologies, slogans, "isms", conventions, propaganda, public opinion, inherited prejudices, orthodoxies, etc.<sup>7</sup> They still hold man prisoner.

So the imaginative pictorial projection of existential self-understanding we find in ancient myths can still be powerful and effective, even when we no longer believe the myths literally.<sup>8</sup>

Now how does any of this bear on Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos? The dilemma with which this article began, it should now be clear, is closely analogous to that which led to the demythologizing of the New Testament. In each case the deadlock was created by the assumption that the myths (of Christ or Cthulhu) must be either dismissed as mere fiction (Christ as a fraud, Lovecraft as a mere storyteller) or taken literally (Christ as a real miracle-worker, Lovecraft as a real occultist). In fact Lovecraft can be seen as a modern myth-maker, expressing in fictional terms his pessimistic, materialistic world-view. Lovecraft's work can be elucidated in two interesting ways in light of Bultmann's demythologizing program, first by way of analogy, and second by way of contrast.

What might at first seem to be a stark difference between the two men is actually a fascinating similarity. This concerns the manner in which the Christian and Lovecraftian mythologies originated. Bultmann follows Strauss in rejecting the notion that early Christian miracle-stories and supernatural myths were anyone's conscious inventions. But Lovecraft, obviously, artificially created his myths. In view of such a difference, can Bultmann's conceptuality be appropriately used to understand Lovecraft? Yes indeed; remember that for Bultmann the most important thing about myth is what it tells us about the myth-maker's (or the myth-believers') existential self-understanding. And in an era when myths may be accepted only as they are "deliteralized", the only way to create new myths is to create them "artificially", or as already demythologized; they will be wittingly non-literal, but true on a deeper level—true to the myth-maker's experience. And this is what Lovecraft (along with some other recent fantasy writers) has done. Lovecraft is a genuine, though "artificial", maker of myth.

The important point of contrast to Bultmann's conception of myth is that Lovecraft's schema is entirely pessimistic with no redemptive element. A great step forward in understanding the Cthulhu Mythos was the removal of the accretions of August Derleth. Derleth had misread Lovecraft and made the Mythos into a cosmic epic of good vs. evil, of fall and redemption. Lovecraft, by contrast, had depicted a bleak scenario wherein man is in danger

<sup>7</sup>Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1962), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup>Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 48-54.

of being crushed by cosmic forces whose existence he does not comprehend, and which in turn are indifferent to his welfare. Clearly, Lovecraft's "Great Old Ones" are mythological figures corresponding to the "powers" and "archons" of the Age of Anxiety in Mediterranean religion. Like them, the Old Ones represent blind social and natural forces that toss us about like flotsam and jetsam. But the Cthulhu Mythos leaves mankind at the mercy of the powers. There is no one to save us. Lovecraft would have regarded Derleth's benevolent "Elder Gods" as an instance of childish wish-fulfillment, as he did the Christian story of salvation. Thus Lovecraft's mythology, though a real mythology expressive of his existential self-understanding, disregards Bultmann's stipulation that "myth expresses man's belief that . . . he can be delivered from the forces within the visible world."<sup>9</sup>

In this Lovecraft's mythos would seem to be unique not only in terms of religious myth, but also in the field of fantasy literature. Not only is it to be contrasted with the work of other writers like Robert E. Howard, who do seem to use mythological elements (Crom, Mitra, the Hyborian Age, etc.) simply as exotic stage-setting, but also with others like J. R. R. Tolkien who also craft modern myths. Tolkien's heroic fantasy mythologizes his existential self-understanding whereby the threatening forces of evil (Sauron, Saruman, Smaug) are finally vanquishable by the heroic efforts of the mundane "common man" (Bilbo, Frodo, Sam Gamgee). For the Catholic Tolkien, the aid of a martyred-and-risen savior (Gandalf) may be necessary, but at the end of the day, the portly little bourgeois can triumph. Tolkien's myth is one of optimism, of "eucatastrophe", but Lovecraft's is one of inevitable, and pointless, catastrophe.

Finally, the fatalistic and absurdist thrust of the Cthulhu Mythos makes evident the fallacy of occasional claims that Lovecraft actually believed in his myths, whether he acknowledged it or tried unsuccessfully to repress this belief, as Kenneth Grant, Robert Turner, Colin Wilson, and Ron Goulart have suggested. (Here one thinks of a cute piece of self-parody by Lovecraft: "God! I wonder if there *isn't* some truth in some of this? What is this my emotions are telling me about Cthulhu? Ya-R'lyeh! Ya-R'lyeh—Cthulhu fhgthagn . . . n'ggah . . . ggll . . . Iä! Iä!" [letter to Frank Belknap Long, November 22, 1930; SL III.234].) Grant and Turner suggest that Lovecraft had unwittingly tapped in on cosmic reality, though he made the mistake of dismissing it as fiction, as if to deny what he knew, deep down, to be the terrible truth. Significantly, Lovecraft almost seems to have foreseen that someone would say this: "Who can disprove any . . . concoction [of the imagination], or say that it is not 'esoterically true' even if its creator did think he invented it in jest or fiction?" (SL III.226). So if anyone wants to maintain that the Cthulhu Mythos is literal truth, there would seem to be no stopping him. But surely this theory runs aground on the fact that the "truth" actually expressed in Lovecraft's fiction (i.e., pessimistic materialism) would seem to be much more terrible than that envisioned by occultists like Grant and Turner! Belief in occultism implies an optimistic attempt to escape the kind of absurdist determinism espoused by Lovecraft. It implies that "supernature",

<sup>9</sup>Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", p. 11.



like nature, is predictable and manipulable by anyone who knows the proper technique. As Bultmann notes, "Even occultism pretends to be a science."<sup>10</sup> Who is the escapist here—the fatalist Lovecraft, or the occultists who would co-opt his popularity in the name of their superstition?

In conclusion it is plain that both those who see Lovecraft's mythology as only a dramatic prop, and those who take the Mythos literally (or believe Lovecraft did), are alike wide of the mark. Modern New Testament scholarship has transcended a similar set of unrealistic assessments of the gospels (as either literal truth or mere hoaxes) by means of demythologizing. Applying this hermeneutical key to the Cthulhu Mythos, Lovecraft's work can be seen to represent *real though artificial* mythology. Thus it is to be taken *seriously* as an expression of Lovecraft's existential self-understanding, but not *literally* as an expression of occult belief. And as a *pessimistic* myth, Lovecraft's fantasy is seen to be not only unique among religious mythology and fantasy literature, but also completely alien to the world-view of literalistic occultists who would initiate him posthumously into their number.

It remains for us to ask whether Lovecraft himself had anything like demythologizing in mind. As it happens, he did. In fact the concept enables us to recognize and understand an important development in his writing that can be pinpointed in the year 1929. In short, Lovecraft began at this point to demythologize his own mythos and to hit the reader directly between the eyes with his bleak vision of cosmic isolation. Lovecraft's narrators begin to "spill the beans", explicitly admitting that the shambling monsters of the *Necronomicon* are primitive myths, inadequate allegories for the real horrors of science and its disorienting revelations.

The first intimation of the new approach is found in "The Mound" (1929). Here the gods Tulu (=Cthulhu) and Yig are demythologized in terms reminiscent of Bultmann. "Religion was a leading interest in Tsath, though very few actually believed in the supernatural. . . ." "Great Tulu [was] a spirit of universal harmony anciently symbolized as the octopus-headed god who had brought all men down from the stars. . . ." On the other hand, "Yig [was] the principle of life symbolized as the Father of all Serpents. . . ." Here the truths masked under the names of the Great Old Ones are not so horrifying, but Tulu and Yig are said to be myths symbolizing abstract truths.

In "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), we hear of the "monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space which the *Necronomicon* had mercifully cloaked under the name of Azathoth." Thus the gibbering daemon-sultan of the *Necronomicon* was merely a cipher for the much more frightening revelations of science. In this case it is the advanced science of the Outer Ones, the living fungi from Yuggoth. Extra-terrestrials occupy center stage again in *At the Mountains of Madness*, written the very next year (1931). The crinoids of ancient Antarctica

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5; see also Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 61; Edward J. Moody, "Urban Witches", in *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977), p. 429.

"were above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the Pnakotic Manuscripts and the *Necronomicon* affrightedly hint about. They were the great 'Old Ones' that had filtered down from the stars when earth was young." Thus the occult and transcendent Great Old Ones of "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Dunwich Horror" were simply a race of space aliens. The import of this fact is still supposed to be horrifying, since these creatures had created humanity "as a jest or mistake" dim ages ago. Man's cosmic insignificance is once again underscored.

"The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932) was clearly written with the new demythologized outlook in mind. Over-zealous student Walter Gilman penetrates the legends of medieval sorcery and witchcraft to discover that they really cloaked a knowledge of advanced mathematics and physics. The Arkham witch Keziah Mason had mastered interdimensional travel. Gilman follows in her footsteps, reaching an alien plane inhabited by beings identical to the Old Ones of *At the Mountains of Madness* except for their winglessness. Some readers might feel inclined to dispute our interpretation of this tale on the grounds that nowhere else in Lovecraft do we find so much of traditional magic and the supernatural. For instance, Keziah Mason is obviously supposed to have been a casualty of the Salem witch trials. She has a rodent-like familiar (Brown Jenkin) and comports with the satanic "Black Man". She even shuns a crucifix! Yet the narration is clear that the real secret of all this is Keziah's precocious discovery of non-Euclidean calculus. The accoutrements of witchcraft are there simply to say that witchcraft's horror was real after all, but with the reality of science.

The same year (1932) Lovecraft collaborated with E. Hoffmann Price on "Through the Gates of the Silver Key". In it Randolph Carter explores transcendental states of mystical consciousness. Carter refers derisively to the superstitious depiction of such experiences in ancient legend, including the *Necronomicon*. Encountering the transfigured bodhisattvas who have made the inner journey before him, "He wondered at the vast conceit of those who had babbled of the malignant Ancient Ones, as if They could pause from their everlasting dreams to wreak a wrath on mankind." Going on to experience the disorientation of the void of "destroyed individuality", he guesses that this "All-in-One and One-in-All" state "was perhaps that which certain secret cults of earth had whispered of as Yog-Sothoth, and which has been a deity under other names . . . yet in a flash the Carter-facet realised how slight and fractional all these conceptions are." Pity poor Henry Armitage who actually believed in a literal Yog-Sothoth.

Finally, in 1934, Lovecraft demythologized the mythos of the Old Ones again in "The Shadow out of Time". There we discover that certain old myths dimly reflected the truth about the Great Race of Yith, another band of extra-terrestrials. "In the *Necronomicon* the presence of . . . a cult among human beings was suggested—a cult that sometimes gave aid to minds voyaging down the aeons from the days of the Great Race." The context implies that this is not quite what the writer of the *Necronomicon* actually thought was going on. Rather, it is implied, Abdul Alhazred entertained some primitive notion such



# THE DUNWICH CHIMERA AND OTHERS

*Correlating the Cthulhu Mythos*

*by Will Murray*



H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos stories, as is commonly known, are grounded in elements of mythology, folklore, science, literature and other sources known only to Lovecraft himself. They derive their principal effects, their utter *convincingness*, from the fact that they contain or allude to concepts which are at least half-recognizable to readers. Lovecraft's entire body of work has been the subject of intense scholarly activity since his death in 1937, much of it predicated upon tantalizing suggestions that he was not merely exercising his tremendous imagination, but creating a coherent, decipherable whole.

It is no secret that Lovecraft borrowed freely from a host of diverse sources when composing his fiction. His published letters document many story origins and, as George T. Wetzel put forth in his article, "The Cthulhu Mythos: A Study", "in Lovecraft's hands, many supernatural concepts that were handled by other writers in orthodox fashion, and close to their traditional outlines, became transmuted into something original and refreshingly new."<sup>1</sup> Wetzel points out that a primary example of this creative act was Lovecraft's splicing together of the Persian ghoulish concept with that of the Celtic changeling. "Pickman's Model", he says, is a prime example of this.

In this same study, Wetzel states that "other facts about [Lovecraft's] Mythos are not too well known, especially the fact that the Greek mythic ideas were formative influences on his Mythos, despite the known fact that the Dunwichean stories gave him the initial push toward the creation of his own Mythos."<sup>2</sup> As evidence Wetzel points to a number of correspondences between pre-Mythos Lovecraft fiction and poetry and Hellenic myths, and to the use, in the Mythos, of the device wherein humans are influenced through dreams by various "gods"—a familiar motif in Greek lore. "Numerous other interesting facets emerge from the Mythos which a book would truly need to be written to show," Wetzel concludes, in reference to these influences.<sup>3</sup>

Wetzel is correct in pointing these things out, but the significance of the Hellenic influences on the Cthulhu Mythos lies not in the fact of these influences, but in Lovecraft's *reasons* for transmuting them for the purposes

<sup>1</sup>"The Cthulhu Mythos: A Study", in *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980), ed. S. T. Joshi, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

of his horror fiction. In that light, the opening line of the seminal Mythos story, "The Call of Cthulhu"—"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents"—gains significance for Lovecraft scholars as well as readers.

Several definite concepts other than the story of the Great Old Ones emerge in "The Call of Cthulhu". One is the linking of Great Old One worship with other religions such as Voodoo and theosophy. This idea is reinforced by the quotation from Algernon Blackwood which heads the story:

Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival . . . a survival of hugely remote period when . . . consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity . . . forms which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Implicit in this quotation is the idea that Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones are the archetypes of entities we know from religion and myth—but we are familiar only with the debased versions of the reality Lovecraft is attempting to create.

Using this as a point of departure, let us assume that both Cthulhu and R'lyeh have distorted reflections in world mythologies.

R'lyeh's inspiration comes to mind easily: the sunken city of Atlantis, first mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus*. According to Greek myth, Atlantis was an island nation, favored by Poseidon, which turned to foreign conquests. In its greed, Atlantis sought eventually to conquer the earth, but it was defeated by the Athenians and an earthquake caused it to sink into the ocean, never to rise again. There are clear analogues between Atlantis and R'lyeh; only certain particulars, most of them chronological (one of Lovecraft's greatest themes), are distorted. Instead of sinking as a consequence of an ill-fated world conquest plan in the past, the legend of Atlantis is a distorted prophecy of R'lyeh's rising from the sea preparatory to Cthulhu's domination over mankind.

If this supposition is correct, then it follows that Cthulhu is prefigured in myth. As described by Lovecraft, Cthulhu is immense and squid-like, but not described in detail. His idols, however, are:

It seemed to be a sort of monster, or symbol representing a monster, of a form which only a diseased fancy could conceive. If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneously pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the *general outline* of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>*The Dunwich Horror and Others* (1963), p. 130.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 132.



There is only one creature in folklore who resembles Cthulhu. This is the Kraken, the gigantic sea creature first mentioned in *A Natural History of Norway* by Erik Ludvigsen Pontoppidan, Bishop of Bergen in the eighteenth century. He says of it:

It is called the Kraken, Kraxen, or some name it Krabben, that word being applied by way of eminences to this creature. This last name seems indeed best to agree with the description of this creature, which is round, flat, and full of arms, or branches.<sup>6</sup>

In essence, the Kraken is a giant squid, a non-anthropomorphic Cthulhu, if you will. Further, according to Daniel Cohen,<sup>7</sup> legend has it that there were only two Krakens and they were almost immortal. They remained, sleeping, on the ocean floor only to rise on the day the world ends.

Lovecraft was unquestionably familiar with the Kraken through his wide reading, and was at least familiar with Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "The Kraken", whose monstrous imagery is so evocative of Lovecraft's fiction that it deserves to be quoted in full:

Below the thunders of the upper deep,  
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee  
About his shadowy sides: above him swell  
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;  
And far away into the sickly light,  
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell  
Unnumber'd and enormous polypi  
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.  
There hath he lain for ages and will lie  
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,  
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;  
Then once by man and angels to be seen,  
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

Cthulhu, according to Lovecraft, is dead, but will live again when R'lyeh rises. Again, the legend is reversed. By "the latter fire", Tennyson means the end of the world.

Are Atlantis and the Kraken, then, the twin bases of "The Call of Cthulhu", and is the motif of the inverted myth the central theme of the Cthulhu Mythos itself? It would seem so with this story. It must therefore hold for the next major Mythos entry, "The Dunwich Horror". As we shall see, it does.

"The Dunwich Horror" begins with another quotation. This one is from

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Cohen, *A Modern Look at Monsters* (Tower, 1969), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38. Like Cthulhu, the Kraken is of tremendous size.

"Witches and Other Night-Fears", by British essayist Charles Lamb, whose life resembles Lovecraft's in its more tragic phases. The quotation thematically resembles the Blackwood quotation:

Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimaeras—dire stories of Celaeno and the Harpies—may reproduce themselves in the brain of superstition—but *they were there before*. They are transcripts, types—the archetypes are in us, and eternal. How else should the recital of that which we know in a waking sense to be false come to affect us at all? Is it that we naturally conceive terror from such objects, considered in their capacity of being able to inflict upon us bodily injury? O, least of all! *These terrors are of older standing. They date beyond body*—or with the body, they would have been the same. . . . That the kind of fear here treated is purely spiritual—that it is strong in proportion as it is objectless on earth, that it predominates in the period of our sinless infancy—are difficulties the solution of which might afford some probable insight into our antemundane condition, and a peep at least into the shadowland of pre-existence.<sup>8</sup>

The particular citation of Greek mythic elements here is telling, because "The Dunwich Horror" is a retelling of Hellenic legends in a New England setting, not unlike Nathaniel Hawthorne's updatings of those same tales in his *Tanglewood Tales*.

Let us first examine the death of Wilbur Whateley, whose true form is hideously revealed when he is attacked and killed by a guard dog while trying to steal the *Necronomicon* from the Miskatonic University Library:

It was partly human, beyond a doubt, with very manlike hands and head, and the goatish, chinless face had the stamp of the Whateleys upon it. But the torso and lower parts of the body were teratologically fabulous, so that only generous clothing could ever have enabled it to walk on earth unchallenged or uneradicated.

Above the waist it was semi-anthropomorphic; though its chest, where the dog's rending paws still rested watchfully, had the leathery, reticulated hide of a crocodile or alligator. The back was piebald with yellow and black, and dimly suggested the squamous covering of certain snakes. Below the waist, though, it was the worst; for here all human resemblance left off and sheer phantasy began. The skin was thickly covered with coarse black fur, and from the abdomen a score of long greenish-grey tentacles with red sucking mouths protruded limply. Their arrangement was odd, and seemed to follow the symmetries of some cosmic geometry unknown to earth or the solar system. On each of the hips, deep set in a kind of pinkish, ciliated orbit, was what seemed to be a rudimentary eye; whilst in lieu of a tail there developed a kind of trunk or feeler with purple annular markings, and with many evidences of being an undeveloped mouth or throat. The limbs, save for their black fur, roughly resembled the hind legs of prehistoric earth's giant

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<sup>8</sup>The *Dunwich Horror*, p. 160.



saurians; and terminated in ridgy-veined pads that were neither hooves nor claws. When the thing breathed, its tail and tentacles rhythmically changed colour, as if from some circulatory cause normal to the non-human side of its ancestry. In the tentacles this was observable as a deepening of the greenish tinge, whilst in the tail it was manifest as a yellowish appearance which alternated with a sickly greyish-white in the spaces between the purple rings. Of genuine blood there was none; only the foetid greenish-yellow ichor which trickled along the painted floor.<sup>9</sup>

At first blush, this bizarre fantasy figure is as remote from anything found in myth as Cthulhu seemed. But examining Wilbur as the prototype of a mythological creature, we find that he is not the fantastic pseudo-Freudian concoction some scholars have suggested. Stripped of his more imaginative appendages, Wilbur is quite obviously a Chimera!

Consider: The Chimera is one of the many Greek hybrid monstrosities who possess attributes of several beasts. According to Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, "The Chimera was a fearful monster, breathing fire. The fore part of its body was a compound of the lion and the goat, and the hind part a dragon's."<sup>10</sup> Wilbur's goatlike face and reptilian chest and legs are definitely Chimerical. The coarse black fur Lovecraft describes may or may not be lionlike, but inasmuch as the Chimera is mentioned in Lamb's preceding quotation, the similarities are certainly not beyond coincidence.

Nor is it coincidental that Lovecraft uses the term "ichor" when referring to Wilbur's blood. Ichor was the blood of the Grecian gods; in modern usage, ichor is discharge from a sore. Here Lovecraft may be deliberately ambiguous, because either definition applies equally.<sup>11</sup>

Stories of earthly mothers who are impregnated (sometimes through supernatural means) by Zeus and other Greek gods abound in Hellenic legends. Modern scholars term this motif the "sacred marriage" and in more than one case such unions resulted in twins. Two of the most famous were Castor and Pollux, offspring of Zeus by Leda, Queen of Sparta. Castor and Pollux are typical Greek culture heroes, civilizers who help mankind out of distress, teach the civilized arts and generally assist the human race along the road from Chaos, the confused and formless mass out of which all life came.

Lovecraft, with characteristic dark humor, simply inverted this myth. As the twin sons of Yog-Sothoth, Wilbur Whateley and his monstrous brother are put on earth not to deliver mankind from Chaos, but to plunge him into it.

Yog-Sothoth, who does not appear in "The Dunwich Horror", is clearly a Zeus equivalent. Originally, Yog-Sothoth was an entity created by Lovecraft in his 1927 novel, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, which he "repudiated" and which never appeared during his lifetime. The first published mention of Yog-

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

<sup>10</sup>*Age of Fable*, ch. 16.

<sup>11</sup>Throughout this article, I will cite Greek legends and interpretations of those legends. My sources, where not otherwise cited, are Bulfinch's *Age of Fable* and Meyer Reinhold's excellent *Past and Present: The Continuity of Classical Myths* (Hakkert, 1972).

Sothoth, curiously enough, was in Lovecraft's revision of Adolphe de Castro's "The Last Test", published in 1928. But this was only a passing mention. The Yog-Sothoth in *Ward* is distinctly a prototype creation who merely shares the same name. But in "The Dunwich Horror" Yog-Sothoth is a powerful force, obviously more potent than Cthulhu, and described in a quotation from the *Necronomicon* reproduced in this story as "the gate" and "the key and guardian of the fate" to the Old Ones.<sup>12</sup> "Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth,"<sup>13</sup> says the book, which echoes the Greek saying that Zeus is "the beginning, middle and end of all."<sup>14</sup>

Zeus, of course, was the chief god of the Greek pantheon, ruler of the heavens, whose name means "bright". He seems to represent infinity, which the Greeks also symbolized by the Gordian Knot, which could not be untied. "The Dunwich Horror" tells us little about Yog-Sothoth, except that, like Zeus, he could impregnate human women through some sort of supernatural means and that one of his sons—Wilbur's twin—resembled him greatly. The resemblance could only mean the tangle of tentacles which comprises the twin's "body", and which certainly brings to mind a hideous living Gordian Knot, without beginning or end.

Wilbur Whateley's Chimerical aspects aside, some consideration should be given to the strong parallels between his life and that of the Greek god Hermes. Hermes was the son of Zeus and the earthly maiden Maia, who on his first day invented the lyre and stole some of Apollo's cows, so that he could sacrifice them to the gods. This precociousness and the sacrifice of cows is very close to Wilbur Whateley's behavior in "The Dunwich Horror". Wilbur let his brother, who was after all more of a god than he, nourish himself off the Whateley cows. Lovecraft alludes to "the strange things that are called out of the earth when a bullock is sacrificed at the proper time to certain heathen gods".<sup>15</sup> Hermes was the god of thieves, but Wilbur was less than successful in his attempt to purloin the *Necronomicon*.

Hermes was also the psychopomp, the conductor of the souls of the dead to Hades. This is especially noteworthy, because the only overt Hellenic reference in "The Dunwich Horror" (other than the *Necronomicon* itself, which Lovecraft translates from the Greek as the "Image [or Picture] of the Law of the Dead")<sup>16</sup> is this mention of psychopomps. In the story, the deaths of the Whateleys are attended by the gathering of whippoorwills, to which Lovecraft gives the Greek term psychopomps, who according to legend try to capture the escaping souls of the dying at the moment of death. This is an actual New England legend, reminiscent perhaps of the birdlike Harpies who torment the living (who are mentioned in the Lamb quotation), to which Lovecraft has given a Greek name entirely in keeping with his principal aims.

Sprinkled throughout the story are other borrowings, or clues, assuming Lovecraft expected anyone one day to correlate them. For one, the famous line from the *Necronomicon*, "The Old Ones are, the Old Ones were, the Old Ones will

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Reinhold, *Past and Present*, p. 126.

<sup>15</sup>*The Dunwich Horror*, p. 169.

<sup>16</sup>SL V.418. [Lovecraft's translation, incidentally, is wrong.—S.T.J.]



be",<sup>17</sup> is undeniably inspired by the hymn sung during the oracular rites to Zeus at Dodona, which includes the line, "Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be."<sup>18</sup> Mentioned also is a new entity, Shub-Niggurath (who had been mentioned briefly in the Lovecraft/de Castro revision, "The Last Test"), whose name is often preceded by the cry "Iä!" Subsequent stories call Shub-Niggurath "the Black Goad of the Woods with a Thousand Young",<sup>18</sup> "the All-Mother"<sup>19</sup> and "a kind of sophisticated Astarte".<sup>20</sup> Astarte was the Hittite version of Hera, wife of Zeus and goddess of fertility. "The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young" is certainly a fertility goddess, and seems to suggest something of a female Pan, too. In a letter to Willis Conover dated September 1, 1936, Lovecraft says: "Yog-Sothoth's wife is the hellish cloud-like entity Shub-Niggurath, in whose honour nameless cults hold the rite of the Goat with a Thousand Young. By her he has two offspring—the evil twins Nug and Yeb."<sup>22</sup> Here we have another set of twins! According to a humorous chronology of the Old Ones set down in a letter to James F. Morton in 1933, Cthulhu is the offspring of Nug.<sup>23</sup>

The weird cry "Iä!" is interesting. Like much of the strange language Lovecraft uses in his stories, it appears to be gibberish. However, by applying the premise of inverted meaning, we have "Ai", the Greek word for "alas" or "woe", which figures in the legend of Hyacinth, a god who died tragically and out of whose blood grew the flower named after him, its petals bearing markings which seem to spell the letters AI. Lovecraft could not help but be acquainted with this story and if it is not a coincidence, then Iä could mean the opposite of woe—rejoice. "Rejoice! Rejoice! Shub-Niggurath!" is a plausible expression used by cultists in virtually all the contexts in which it appears throughout the Mythos.

Lovecraft was not exclusively inspired by Greek myth in creating the Cthulhu Mythos. His gods, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, and Nyarlathotep, bear distinctly Egyptian names. Other influences have been adequately covered in other articles, but myths, and especially Greek folklore, were the primary formative influence on the Mythos as it was taking shape in "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Dunwich Horror". Although the Hellenic inspiration is noticeably reduced in subsequent Mythos stories, the notion that familiar myths are distortions of the "reality" of the Great Old Ones is not absent. For example, "The Curse of Yig", which Lovecraft wrote for Zealia Bishop, rather expressly states that the snake-god Yig (later annexed into the Mythos), the "Father of Serpents", was the "prototype" for the Aztec's great civilizing god, Quetzalcoatl. Actually, Quetzalcoatl inspired Yig. This story and the later revision, "The Electric Executioner", allude to the connections between Aztec gods and those of the Mythos, even to the extent of adding Yog-Sothoth ("Yog-Sototl") to the Aztec pantheon. A character in this

<sup>17</sup>*The Dunwich Horror*, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup>Reinhold, *Past and Present*, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup>*The Dunwich Horror*, p. 230.

<sup>20</sup>*The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* (1970), p. 353.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>SL V.303.

<sup>23</sup>SL IV.183.

story babbles alternately about Aztec and Greek myths—a peculiar combination except that they are both presented as survivals of Cthulhu mythology. Lovecraft's next two stories, both revisions, were "The Mound" and "Medusa's Coil", both of which use diverse folklore as their bases. With his revision work, Lovecraft tended to cover manifestations of the Great Old Ones in locales other than his native New England, diluting the purity of his vision to a noticeable degree.

This dilution is especially evident in the next Mythos story he wrote by himself, "The Whisperer in Darkness", wherein Lovecraft really begins to annex material from his colleagues' works, as well as from prior writers like Machen and Poe. In short, the Mythos becomes a sort of lodestone attracting literary references indiscriminately, including some from early, non-Mythos stories by Lovecraft himself, thus causing such stories to be considered belonging to the Mythos, when in fact they may not.

"The Whisperer in Darkness" begins in typical fashion. It is set in Vermont, and narrated by a reclusive folklorist, Albert Wilmarth, who speaks at length about the finding of strange dead bodies after a flood and their possible link with "the little people" of Celtic and Greek legend, and of the unity of all myths from Greek fauns to the Nepalese Abominable Snowman.

Human contact with dwarves, gnomes, and other little people is another universal in world mythology, and appears to be the basis of this story. The Outer Beings—the crablike plants who have come to earth to mine minerals, but who from time to time have contacted human beings—are typical of Kobolds, who work the mines in German lore and live underground. The business of Henry Akeley's journeying to their abode is identical to the motif of the legends of those who have visited the little people, and who often return only to find their world changed.

*At the Mountains of Madness* was written as a semi-sequel to Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, but incorporating some of Charles Fort's ideas.<sup>24</sup> The central idea is that creatures from outer space, called the "Old Ones" (as opposed to the godlike "Great Old Ones") came to earth and erected cities long before the advent of mankind. These creatures, like the Outer Beings, are a combination of highly evolved vegetables and sea creatures. Throughout prehistory, the Old Ones ruled our planet and expanded their empire. On several occasions, they warred with external threats, at one point fighting the octopi spawn of Cthulhu, who wrested the land from the Old Ones until R'lyeh sank, taking with it the Cthulhu minions. In later years, they skirmished with the Outer Beings of "The Whisperer in Darkness".

<sup>24</sup>Among Fort's ideas, derived from a whimsical examination and correlation of strange phenomena all over the world, is the notion that human beings may be the property of extra-terrestrials. Another Fortean notion involves his noticing that widely separated phenomena often occur at the same times, but with no other explainable connection. Wetzel has pointed out that the events of "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Whisperer in Darkness" share a similar chronology. Fort also suggested that extra-terrestrials sometimes "fish" for humans, a conceit which seemingly inspired the term "Fishers from Outside" used in "Winged Death" and *Fungi from Yuggoth*.



The Old Ones, according to the story, created all terrestrial life—including, by accident, mankind—before the race fell to the shoggoths—shape-shifting creatures they created to perform tasks, but who grew too powerful to control.

Buried deep in the background of this story is a creation myth certainly at variance with the usual accounts of the birth of mankind. In Greek mythology, for instance, mankind either sprang out of the earth spontaneously or was created by divine intervention. Most myths involve the latter, which signals the close ties that exist between man and his gods. Lovecraft's version is nearly the opposite: mankind was created, not purposely by divine beings, but accidentally by superior aliens who never considered their creation as anything but an aberration.

In "The Shadow over Innsmouth", written next, Lovecraft goes back to basics. This novelette is unencumbered by the wild impedimenta of its immediate predecessors, being the chronicle of the effects of interbreeding between the amphibious denizens of an underwater city in the Pacific and the people of a New England seaport. World mythology is full of stories of mermaids and seal-folk who fall in love with surface people, usually with tragic results. Lovecraft magnified the scale and raised the element of haunting tragedy to horrific levels. Again, he reaffirms his basic premise within the story itself: "After all, the strangest and maddest of myths are often merely symbols or allegories based upon truth. . . ." <sup>25</sup>

The Salem witches and their familiars clearly inspired the next Mythos story, "The Dreams in the Witch House", which is about a student who stumbles across the methods by which witches were able to travel—they entered hyperspace using advanced mathematics, not magic. The student, Walter Gilman, encounters an ancient witch, Keziah Mason, and her familiar, Brown Jenkin, who repeatedly lead him into hyperspace and the "Black Man" (Nyarlathotep) who will conduct him to "Azathoth, which rules all time and space from a black throne at the centre of Chaos". <sup>26</sup>

Nyarlathotep is a pre-Mythos figure later incorporated into the pantheon in various incarnations. Like Hermes, he is the messenger of the Great Old Ones. In this story, he is the Black Man of witch covens, also known as the Devil. Azathoth also predates the Mythos, and is mentioned in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (which Lovecraft disavowed) and in "The Whisperer in Darkness" as "the monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space". <sup>27</sup> As previously mentioned, the concept of a primordial Chaos as the source of all life and matter is distinctly Grecian. But in the Mythos, it seems to be a place to which all life is drawn where it will be impersonally absorbed.

<sup>25</sup> *The Dunwich Horror*, p. 330. Regarding legends surrounding seal-folk, Lovecraft's *Commonplace Book* contains the following notation: "Ghouls of the sea that come to land in guise of seals and prey upon mankind!" See *The Shuttered Room*, p. 121. In "Innsmouth", the hybrids are sort of fish-frogs, not seals.

<sup>26</sup> *At the Mountains of Madness*, p. 267.

<sup>27</sup> *The Dunwich Horror*, p. 262.

Several stories reinforce this idea. Azathoth is described as a demon-sultan who rules in Ultimate Chaos with his messenger Nyarlathotep, the "Crawling Chaos". He is depicted in Lovecraft's sonnet sequence *Fungi from Yuggoth* as mindless and impersonal the "vast Lord of All in darkness" who "dreamed but could not understand".<sup>28</sup>

It is very significant that in his 1933 genealogy, Lovecraft set Azathoth as the progenitor of the Great Old Ones. He gave birth, without benefit of a mate, to Nyarlathotep, the Nameless Mist, and Darkness. The Nameless Mist spontaneously begat Yog-Sothoth and Darkness begat Shub-Niggurath, who in turn begat the other gods.

This portion of the genealogy is strikingly similar to the Greek creation myth which also begins with Chaos. From Chaos came Gaea (Mother Earth), Eros (Desire), Erebus (Darkness), and Nyx (Night). Spontaneously and through various pairings, other entities, such as Sea and Sky, were produced. These led to a race called the Titans, a new race of Gods, and a race of giants. Long before mankind was born, these races fought horrendous wars, the Titanomachy and the Giantomachy, with the end result that Zeus emerged victorious, but not before Gaea's husband, Uranus (Sky), exiled Chaos beyond the river that surrounded the earth, called Oceanus. The Giants were imprisoned under the earth, but the Titans were responsible for the creation of the human race.

There are strong parallels between these wars among different groups and the conflicts between the Great Old Ones and the Outer Beings and the Old Ones as presented in "The Whisperer in Darkness" and *At the Mountains of Madness*. The Old Ones who created man are rather like the Titans. The Greek legends deal with a succession of gods before Zeus, which is just as confused as the pre-human history Lovecraft presents in his later Mythos fiction, but not entirely inconsistent with it.

In his early Dunsanian fantasy, "The Strange High House in the Mist", written shortly after "The Call of Cthulhu", Lovecraft touched upon the relationship between the Greek gods and his own creations:

. . . Olney listened to rumours of old times and far places, and heard how the kings of Atlantis fought with the slippery blasphemies that wriggled out of the rifts in ocean's floor. . . . Years of the Titans were recalled, but the host grew timid when he spoke of the dim first age of chaos before the gods or even the Elder Ones were born, and when the other gods came to dance on the peak of Hatheg-Kla. . . .

By the Elder Ones, Lovecraft may mean the pre-Hellenic gods worshipped by mankind. The other gods, also called the Other Gods from Outside, have to be the entities of the Mythos.

Written in the same year, 1932, as "The Dreams in the Witch House" was a collaboration with E. Hoffmann Price, "Through the Gates of the Silver Key". This is a sequel of sorts to the repudiated *Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and features the same protagonist, Randolph Carter. In *Dream-Quest*, Carter

<sup>28</sup>"Azathoth", *Fungi from Yuggoth* XXII.



sees a city in his dreams and seeks it. After many perils, he finds the onyx castle atop a mountain, Unknown Kadath, which is very much like Mount Olympus, home of the Greek gods. Here are supposed to dwell the "mild, feeble gods of earth" as opposed to the "Other Gods" from "outside".<sup>29</sup> But Carter finds the gods of earth have left Unknown Kadath, and only one of the Other Gods, Nyarlathotep, is to be found. This distinction between the gods we know and those we know not—which is also the theme of "The Other Gods"—underscores Lovecraft's theme that the gods in whom mankind has taken comfort are non-existent and the true gods are terrible, alien beings beyond our imaginations.

But in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key", Carter embarks upon another dream-quest, this time in search of the Great Old Ones of the *Necronomicon*. He encounters a new entity not mentioned in any other story or in Lovecraft's genealogy, 'Umr at-Tawil, the Most Ancient One, also known as "the Prolonged of Life" and the "Guide and Guardian of the Gate" to Yog-Sothoth.<sup>30</sup> 'Umr at-Tawil leads Carter to a surprisingly non-hostile Yog-Sothoth, and discovers "that Illusion is the One Reality, and that Substance is the Great Imposter."<sup>31</sup> Carter also learns that he is part of Yog-Sothoth, and has no separate identity himself. These are both Eastern concepts, possibly contributions by Price, although Lovecraft is supposed to have virtually discarded Price's contributions to the story.

'Umr at-Tawil has something of the flavor of the entity created by Lord Dunsany, Mana-Yood-Sushai, in his story "Pegāna", but again seems to owe something to the gods of mythology. There is a god, Pontus ("The Sea"), also known as the "old one", mentioned in Greek myths as a pre-Greek sea god with whom Lovecraft may have been familiar, but a likelier source could be Atum, "the very old one" who occupies the same position in the Egyptian genealogy of gods as Chaos does in the Greek. Atum gave birth to Shu (air) and his female counterpart, Tefnut, who in turn begat Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), from whom the later gods, Osiris, Isis, and others, came.

The Egyptian genealogy also accounts for the evil twins, Nug and Yeb, who gave birth to Cthulhu and the others, mentioned in the Lovecraft genealogy as the offspring of Yog-Sothoth and Shub-Niggurath. Lovecraft merely changed one letter each in Geb and Nut, to get Nug and Yeb. These two entities are mentioned in early Mythos stories and revisions, but Lovecraft never explored their possibilities. According to Samuel N. Kramer's *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, in Egyptian legend Nut was known as the "sow who eats her piglets", which echoes, intentionally or not, "The Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young". Nug and Yeb occupy precisely the same positions in Lovecraft's genealogy that Nut and Geb do in Egyptian lore.

In 1933, Lovecraft wrote two minor Mythos stories, "The Thing on the Doorstep" and a revision, "The Horror in the Museum". The former story concerns a man who marries a woman from Innsmouth, who turns out to be possessed by the spirit of an Innsmouth wizard. The link with the Innsmouth people and certain Cthulhu references make this a marginal Mythos story. No recognizable myths lie buried in the tale.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>At the Mountains of Madness, p. 376.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>32</sup>However, Lovecraft in this story reveals the existence of a sur-

"The Horror in the Museum" introduces a peripheral Cthulhu entity, Rhan-Tegoth, which is described as vaguely resembling Medusa, but this may be a convenient analogy more than it is a conceptual parallel. However, Medusa and the Gorgons seem to have inspired at least two Lovecraft revisions. "Medusa's Coil", written with Zealia Bishop, is the story of a modern Medusa who is linked with sunken R'lyeh, and therefore actually predates Medusa. Like Medusa, Ghatanothoa, the entity introduced in "Out of the Eons", a Lovecraft/Hazel Heald collaboration, possesses the power to turn any who gaze upon it into stone—with the exception of the brain which lives on.

The profusion of Medusa images in Lovecraft's work suggests something else. Lovecraft, in describing the Cthulhu image in "The Call of Cthulhu", placed special emphasis on its "general outline" rather than on the idol's details, which were "shockingly frightful".<sup>33</sup> It is possible that Lovecraft was referring to the resemblance between the serpent-haired head of Medusa and the octopus head of Cthulhu with its waving tentacles. The Gorgon's head is a well-known horrific image, and the sight of its familiar outline suggested by an equally repulsive idol would be quite a shock to the beholder. Unfortunately, only Lovecraft could verify or contradict the validity of this possibly far-fetched supposition.<sup>34</sup>

Lovecraft's final Mythos story, "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), was written in response to Robert Bloch's "Shambler from the Stars", in which a fictional version of Lovecraft met a nameless fate. In "Haunter", Lovecraft puts a fictionalized Robert Bloch through a similar experience. The character, Robert Blake, discovers a weird box in a church associated with the Starry Wisdom cult in Providence. It contains a curiously carved polyhedron, which is the key to summoning the Haunter of the Dark, another of Lovecraft's nebulous entities, termed "an avatar of Nyarlathotep".<sup>35</sup> Naturally, it does.

This last story, whether deliberately or not, evokes the myth of Pandora's Box. Pandora was the first woman, according to Greek myth, whose curiosity caused her to open a forbidden box, releasing all the evils of the world (some versions have her releasing and losing all the blessings of the gods intended for mankind), but also releasing hope. The Haunter of the Dark is an entity who can only exist in darkness and fears light. He is anything but hope. You might say that he is the inverse of hope, as a matter of fact.

Now that we have introduced significant thematic and incident evidence to support a largely Grecian basis for the Cthulhu Mythos, some examination

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viving witch-cult in Chesuncook, Maine, possibly setting the stage for a story Lovecraft never got around to writing. Chesuncook was—and remains—the northernmost inhabited area of that state, a perfect place for an underground witch-coven. In "The Haunter of the Dark", the supposed protagonist is about to embark upon a "long-planned novel" about a remote Maine witch-cult.

<sup>33</sup>The Dunwich Horror, p. 132.

<sup>34</sup>It is worth mentioning that Cthulhu resembles the animal-headed gods of old Egypt.

<sup>35</sup>The Dunwich Horror, p. 120.



of H. P. Lovecraft's motives in drawing upon this particular source for his New England horror stories is in order.

Lovecraft, by his own admission, was very much an admirer of Greek mythology and lore. This passion began at an early age, Lovecraft told Maurice W. Moe in a letter dated January 1, 1915:

Grimm's *Fairy Tales* were my delight until at the age of seven I chanced upon Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*. Then and there began an undying passion for classical mythology, which soon increased by Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*. All the world became ancient Greece to me; I looked for Naiades in the fountain on the lawn, and forebore to break the shrubbery for fear of harming the Dryades. My attempts at versification, of which I made the first at the age of six, now took on a crude, internally rhyming ballad metre, and I sang of the exploits of Gods and Heroes. . . . (SL I.7)

Elsewhere, Lovecraft speaks of having been a pagan at that age and of the near-religious experience he had building altars to Pan and Apollo. He did go through several such phases, in which Arabian tales, Roman myths, and eighteenth-century life alternately captured his imagination, but he never entirely lost his fondness for things Greek. Many of his early fantasies, "Hypnos", "The Tree", and others, have obvious Greek roots. As early as 1919, he was writing poems like "Oceanus", "Clouds", and "Mother Earth", which combined Hellenic imagery with the suggestion that those legends conceal unknown horrors. One story, "The Tree", written in 1920, Lovecraft described in a letter to Frank Belknap Long as combining "modern cynicism, Greek Tragedy, and Oriental Fantasy" (SL I.121). The 1925 story, "In the Vault", written but a year before "The Call of Cthulhu", adapts the Greek myth of Procrustes, the mad innkeeper who cut off the heads or feet of guests who did not fit his beds, to modern burial practices. The rationale behind the Cthulhu Mythos was taking shape well before Cthulhu's creation.

Why distort, and even pervert, his beloved myths for the Cthulhu Mythos? The answer lies in, and is central to, Lovecraft's strategy as a horror fiction writer.

Lovecraft, as is well known, eschewed the mundane and cliché ghost-story elements in his fiction. His genius was that he applied new concepts and broke new ground in the field, even if these new concepts were merely old myths changed almost beyond recognition. Ultimately, his stories are so effective and convincing because he wrote, not about ghosts and vampires (in which he did not believe anyway) but about things he personally found frightful or detestable. "Cool Air" and *At the Mountains of Madness* are two of the most telling examples of this, because each reflects his total aversion to cold weather. Lovecraft hated the sea and could not stand seafood, either—a phobia he wonderfully transmits through "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth".

By the same token, Lovecraft set much of his horror fiction in New England, which he loved; but it was often a rustic, decadent New England—

a vision of his beloved stamping ground gone to decay and worse. When not engaged in horror, he frequently wrote of the historic or pastoral aspects of the region with undisguised affection. His attachment to the area is legendary, just as his hatred of New York and its "mongrel hordes" (who often figured in his stories) was unbounded. Lovecraft wrote so convincingly of this imaginary decadent New England because the prospect of the region falling into ruin was genuinely abhorrent to him.

The same principle impelled Lovecraft to invert various Grecian myths for his Cthulhu stories. It was a brilliant psychological tactic. Lovecraft dealt with undeniably fantastic ideas, ones with which his readers would be less familiar—and less comfortable—than the ghost-vampires of old. Lovecraft distorted Greek themes not merely because they provided him with excellent plot and thematic loam, but because this perversion of the beloved myths of his youth was genuinely disturbing to him. Further, whether intentionally or not, Lovecraft's stories seem to evoke subliminal associations in the minds of his readers, making for very potent horror. Even if those readers were unaware of the associations, just as they might not realize the deeper import of his New England settings, yet if this approach enabled Lovecraft to get himself into a suitably horrific mood, it stands to reason he could more readily communicate that mood to others.

Lovecraft clearly alluded to this tactic of his in a letter to Frank Belknap Long dated February 27, 1931, in which he admits his Cthulhu stories are "basically immature", but states: "The only permanently artistic use of Yog-Sothothery, I think, is in symbolic or associative phantasy of the frankly poetic type; in which fixed dream-patterns of the natural organism are given an embodiment & crystallisation" (SL III.293). By "fixed dream-patterns", Lovecraft seems to be referring to the remarkable similarities among the mythologies of different cultures.

H. P. Lovecraft, then, was a transformer of myth—principally Hellenic myth—in his formative Cthulhu Mythos concepts. The fundamental basis for the Mythos is that the Great Old Ones dropped onto the earth from space aeons ago, fought with numerous pre-human civilizations, were imprisoned under the sea and in other places and, although dormant now, will one day rise again to reclaim this planet from mankind. Instead of the anthropomorphic if somewhat capricious gods of Olympus who were man's saviors and allies, he gave us remote, non-human entities who do not desire man's worship, but who will quite readily use individual men to further their plans. As Lovecraft often stated, these entities are not evil, but are definitely threatening because of their utter *indifference* to us, much the way we are indifferent to insects. This is a marvellously effective premise because, although Lovecraft based his stories on early myths, the effect he strove for, successfully, was to make it appear that these old folktales were in fact survivals of the even earlier Cthulhu Mythos.

This article is intended as a preliminary excavation into some of the darker recesses of the Cthulhu Mythos. In a piece of this length, not all facets of some of the issues raised can be fully explored, nor can the important literary influences on Lovecraft's work—notably those of Lord Dun-



sany.<sup>36</sup> Some of the connections presented here may be coincidental, but others clearly are not. All such mythological allusions are presented in the interest of their possible, if not necessarily inherent, value.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that the term Cthulhu Mythos is itself Greek, although it seems to have been coined by August Derleth, not Lovecraft. *Mythos* is a Greek word, originally meaning "tale" or "fiction", but now means "myth". Because Lovecraft's Mythos was first recognized in "The Call of Cthulhu", the Cthulhu name has stuck even though he is a minor deity in the pantheon. Some have suggested the name be changed. I think not. Lovecraft once wrote, referring to the manner in which he coined names for his gods, that "To a large extent they are designed to suggest—either closely or remotely—certain names in actual history or folklore which have weird or sinister associations connected with them" (SL IV.386). If this is true of Cthulhu, I wonder if the name derives from the Greek Chthonia, which gives us the synonym for subterranean, Chthonic. Inasmuch as most of Lovecraft's gods are imprisoned under the earth and sea, perhaps the Cthulhu Mythos is not so inappropriately named after all!<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Lovecraft credits Dunsany with influencing his creation of an artificial pantheon. Only a year after discovering Dunsany, Lovecraft wrote "Nyarlathotep", whose name was probably suggested by a god named in *Time and the Gods*, Mynarthitep, or by Alhireth-Hotep in *The Gods of Pegāna*.

<sup>37</sup>A final observation: As late as 1933, Lovecraft mentioned that ". . . classical legend is full of fruitful themes—I have for years been thinking of basing a tale on the celebrated *Oracle of Trophonius*—that yawning cave whose nighted revelations were such that none who had received them ever smiled again" (SL IV.324-25). It goes without saying that Lovecraft would not have retold that legend, but recast it as a New England horror tale.

<sup>38</sup>The derivation of Cthulhu (Kθ-) from Chthonia (Xθ-) is etymologically impossible in Greek, although it is still possible (but not, I think, likely) that Lovecraft could have made such a connexion.—S.T.J.

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*Continued from p. 9*

as that the Old Ones might beget their progeny upon mankind. Again, the dreadful truth is a scientific, not a magical, one. In the same story, it is the discovery of the incredibly ancient Australian ruins, with their implication of intelligent pre-human life, that terrifies the archaeologist Mackenzie: "These blocks are so ancient they frighten me."

# CTHULHU'S SCALP:

*Lovecraft and the Nordic Tradition*

*by Jason C. Eckhardt*



There is little argument about the presence of Greek and Roman mythology in the writing of H. P. Lovecraft; one need only read the short story "The Tree", set in ancient Greece, to find this in its purest form, while references ranging from the mention of Attis and Cybele in "The Rats in the Walls" to the Latin epigraph for "The Festival" all belie the ancient cultures that Lovecraft loved so well. There remains, however, another mythology that Lovecraft admired whose influence may not be so readily observed: Norse mythology. While Lovecraft's love for the classical myths extended back to his early childhood, certain statements show that his love for the Norse myths was comparable. "I am naturally a Nordic—. . . a Viking . . . a drinker of foemen's blood from new-picked skulls" (SL I.227), and again: "those yellow-bearded gods of war and dominion before whom my own soul bows as before no other—Woden, Thor, Freyr and the vast Alfadur—frosty blue-eyed giants worthy of the admiration of a conquering people!"<sup>1</sup> Now, while it is a little difficult to picture the erudite author as an ax-wielding berserk, the sentiment is clear. His tastes were modelled after the Greeks and Romans, but he could not deny his Anglo-Saxon blood; and this writer will attempt to prove, through a series of comparisons, that this Teutonic background was a subtle but undeniable influence in Lovecraft's stories.

Starting at the very beginning, the Norse worlds were said to have been created from a chaos of mingled fire and ice. Where these two worlds, Muspelheim and Niflheim respectively, met, a huge giant named Ymir and his cow were created. The first gods were created by the heat of the cow's tongue as it licked at the rime on the edge of this chaos, and these gods went on to kill Ymir and, hurling his body into the pit of the chaos, created the world from his corpse. Lovecraft's pantheon is headed by two monstrous entities named Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth, and it is noteworthy that this latter is referred to as "the idiot Chaos".<sup>2</sup> There is certainly a very heavy Egyptian sound to these two names, but there remains a similarity between "Yog-Sothoth" and "Yg", one of the many names of the Norse god Odin. As "Yg" translates to mean "the Terrible One", a name appropriate for either Odin or Yog-Sothoth, this seems a good parallel; but it only extends so far. A far better parallel could be drawn between Yog-Sothoth and Ymir, also see-

<sup>1</sup>Lovecraft to Mrs. F. C. Clark, 12 September 1925; quoted in L. Sprague de Camp, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (1975), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>"Nyarlatheotep", sonnet XXI of *Fungi from Yuggoth*.



ing Azathoth as the chaos out of which Ymir sprang. Lovecraft, quoting from his fictional *Necronomicon*, tells us this about Yog-Sothoth: "Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where they shall break through again. . . . The wind gibbers with Their voices, and the earth mutters with Their consciousness. They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not the forest nor the city behold the hand that smites. . . . The ice-desert of the South and the sunken isles of Ocean hold stones whereon Their seal is graven."<sup>3</sup> Here we see the comparison extend to the frost-giants, descendants of Ymir and embodiments of storms and other natural phenomena. Like the Old Ones, their presence was felt in wild places and in the unbridled fury of nature, when they "broke through" from their realm of Jotunheim to the lands of men. The references to an ice-desert and sunken isles are also relevant, considering the icy lands of the frost-giants, and the home of Ægir, a giant who made his home in a hall of gold on the ocean floor. These giants were at constant war with the Æsir gods, who were led by Odin, and again a parallel exists in Lovecraft. In *At the Mountains of Madness* the narrator discovers the history of the star-headed Old Ones, including the account of a fabulous war that the Old Ones waged against the octopoid minions of Cthulhu. This war ends in a truce, with the land given over to the Cthulhuoids and the seas and older lands left to the Old Ones. Similarly, the Æsir gods fought a war with another group of gods, the Vanir, also ending in a truce and an exchange of hostages. The two wars in Norse mythology as opposed to the one in Lovecraft can be explained as follows: the Vanir and the giants are never seen at the same time, with the exception of Njord, Freyr, and Freya, the three hostages given to the Æsir (and even then, Njord and Freyr wed giants' daughters), and thus can collectively be associated with the Old Ones. This can be extended further by examining the realms of the giants and of the Old Ones, both of which are frozen mountainous lands. Further, the narrator in *At the Mountains of Madness* equates the Antarctic plateau of the Old Ones' city with another plateau mentioned in Lovecraft, the plateau of Leng. This bleak tableland appears alternately in a land of dreams (*Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*) and in an unspecified locale in the Far East ("The Hound", etc.). As the plateau of Leng, it houses a race of uncouth, squat, Mongoloid people; and bearing this in mind, we can go on to equate them with the loutish frost-giants and the Old Ones with the Vanir gods. One final note on this aspect is the locations of Leng and Jotunheim, both given as far to the mysterious east of the protagonists or narrator in each literature.

Returning to separate deities, there arises the awesome form of Cthulhu in Lovecraft's work, a being that perhaps resembles most the Norse god Odin. Both are rulers of their respective races, both are powerful magicians, and both are (or will be) resurrected from the dead. In Odin's case, he hanged himself—Odin sacrificed to Odin—to obtain more knowledge and magical powers. Here Cthulhu differs, having been dragged to the ocean floor by a natural cataclysm, but is destined to rise again to reclaim dominion over the world, much as Odin walked forth from the tree to rule gods and men. In both these

<sup>3</sup>Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (1963), pp. 174-75.

beings, thought is a powerful tool: Odin sends his two ravens, Huginn ("Thought") and Muninn ("Memory"), out over the world each morning to see everything that happens, return, and whisper to him all that they have found. Similarly, Cthulhu sends out his dreams to the sensitive to help in his release from his tomb. Finally, there is a similarity between Odin's throne, Hlidskjalf ("Rock-Opening"), and his hall, Valaskjalf ("Shelf of the Slain"), and Cthulhu's "stone house" in the "corpse-city of R'lyeh".<sup>4</sup>

While there appears to be a large influence by Odin upon Lovecraft's work, there is little if any by that other well-known Norse god, Thor, god of thunder. This would at first appear surprising until one recalls the nature of Thor: loud, brawling, drinking, sometimes stupid but always the common man's best friend. There is no room in Lovecraft's universe for such a being; the indifference of the cosmos to the doings of Lovecraft's characters precludes any saving influence, beyond blind luck, and this applies to Freyr as well, who, despite Lovecraft's statement cited at the beginning of this article, was a god of fertility and not war. These two beings were undeniably forces of good, but while Odin was their ruler, the same could not be said of him. He often tricked giants and people, and Loki once let it slip that Odin had often gathered with witches to do black magic. As Kevin Crossley-Holland has said, "He [Odin] is a terrifying god; maybe a god to be respected, but not a god to be loved."<sup>5</sup> The same could be applied to Lovecraft's gods.

Following Odin and Thor in importance in the Norse myths is the colourful figure of Loki, and it is with him that we find perhaps the strongest presence in Lovecraft. The devious, mysterious shape-shifter, who taunts the very gods who shelter him, can be none other than Nyarlathotep. Starting with physical resemblances, Nyarlathotep is described as "wrapped in fabrics red as sunset's flame",<sup>6</sup> while Loki's very name means "flame". The practical-joker Loki is mirrored briefly in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, when one reads that "around [Nyarlathotep's] eyes there lurked the languid sparkle of capricious humour",<sup>7</sup> and again when it becomes plain that he has played a huge trick on Randolph Carter. Loki becomes increasingly cruel as the myths progress, finally slandering and vilifying the gods to their faces in the myth "Loki's Flyting"; and, again in *Dream-Quest*, we find Nyarlathotep "taunting insolently the mild gods of earth".<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the strongest tie one finds between the two is their common ability to change shape. Loki is found at various times in the guise of a fly, a mare, a seal, a falcon, and an old hag; Nyarlathotep appears at different times as a goat-hoofed black man, a "three-lobed burning eye",<sup>9</sup> and the "Crawling Chaos"; and is further described as having "a thousand other forms".<sup>10</sup> One final note on this character is its "otherness"; for while both Nyarlathotep and Loki are grouped with the gods, Loki is in

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>5</sup>Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Norse Myths* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. xxvi.

<sup>6</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>7</sup>Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (1964), p. 378.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>9</sup>*Dunwich Horror*, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup>*At the Mountains of Madness*, p. 382.



fact a jotun, of the same blood as the frost-giants, adopted by Odin; and Nyarlathotep remains the only one of Lovecraft's gods who is capable of taking another form and mingling with humans.

On the subject of Nyarlathotep, there is also a similarity between him and the Norse figure of Surt, Lord of Muspelheim, land of fire. There is also a physical resemblance here, as Surt's name describes him as "Black", while Nyarlathotep appears as a tall, black man in "The Dreams in the Witch House". The two share the element of fire as well; Robert Blake, in "The Haunter of the Dark", writes of the thing inhabiting the Starry Wisdom Church steeple as being "an avatar of Nyarlathotep",<sup>11</sup> and he feels a great heat upon approaching it, as well as finding evidence of fire in the steeple itself. Again, the mention of a "three-lobed burning eye" is redolent of Surt and his flaming sword. Like Surt, Nyarlathotep is hinted at having a large part in the final destruction of the world, and it is fair to assume that, like Surt, he will bring fire upon the land.

There remain a few lesser echoes of the Norse imagination in the work of Lovecraft which deserve mention. One of these is the role of the dog, primarily represented in Lovecraft in the short story "The Hound". While the creature in this tale turns out not to be a hound at all, there is a reference to an amulet depicting a hound, said to be the symbol of the "corpse-eating cult of inaccessible Leng".<sup>12</sup> Once again we see a bond between Leng and Jotunheim; for the dog or wolf in Norse mythology is invariably a jotun in disguise, a cunning and bloodthirsty beast which delights in maiming and killing. In particular, the beast in "The Hound" echoes the hound Garm, the beast which guards the entrance to the hall of the dead, chewing on corpses. There are exceptions to this rule in each case—the two faithful wolves Frekki and Gerri sitting at the feet of Odin, and the German shepherd that kills Wilbur Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror"—but even these are merely servants doing their jobs, as opposed to the overt malignancy of the greater number. This is a far cry from Lovecraft's beloved Romans, who claimed their descent from the foundlings of a she-wolf. Conversely, the Norse shared an affection for cats with Lovecraft, as shown by their depicting Freya, goddess of love, in a cart drawn by cats.

Another, more subtle influence from the Norse myths may be the very temperament of the narrator. Resigned to the titanic churnings of fate, he is the true descendant of Freyr's servant Skirnir, who, faced with death, resolutely says, "Fearlessness is better than faint heart for any man who puts his nose out of doors. The length of my life and the hour of my death were fated long ago."<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the Lovecraftian protagonist presses on in the face of madness and oblivion, realising the futility of his puny actions yet still bothering to write them down in the hope that it will do *some* good. As with Lovecraft himself, it is pointless to try to picture his bookish heroes as mad-eyed warriors; but the same determination that fuels the Professor Armitages and Randolph Carters and Robert Blakes to dig a little fur-

<sup>11</sup>Dunwich Horror, p. 120.

<sup>12</sup>Lovecraft, *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (1965), p. 155.

<sup>13</sup>Crossley-Holland, *Norse Myths*, p. 56.

ther, to keep looking for that right incantation, even as the clouds assemble in all quarters of the sky, is the same determination that would keep a beserker slashing away in the midst of overwhelming hordes.

There are many features, this writer is sure, of the Lovecraft Mythos that conform not only to Norse mythology but to general mythological patterns as well. But it is significant to note this particular resemblance because of its many features and because it was one to which Lovecraft himself hinted. There is no question but that Lovecraft's mythos is a unique, highly imaginative and powerful invention; and this writer hopes that this paper has only shown an unconscious though pervading influence from the Norse. For, as in the Norse creation myth, what Lovecraft did was to take many different ideas, the Norse among them, a veritable chaos of inspirations, and forge them into his own shining, new vision.

## CONTRIBUTORS

PETER CANNON has written two academic papers on Lovecraft: an honours thesis for Stanford University (1973) and a master's thesis for Brown University (1974). His articles on Lovecraft have appeared in *Nyctalops* and other journals, and a lengthy fictional work inspired by Lovecraft, "The Madness out of Space", is currently appearing in *Eldritch Tales*.

JASON ECKHARDT is best known as one of the most brilliant young fantasy artists of recent years, and his illustrations will soon receive wide dissemination in a future issue of *Twilight Zone*. His talents as author are being recognised through short stories (both serious and parodic) and articles published in the amateur press.

S. T. JOSHI is editor of *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980), and author of the definitive bibliography of Lovecraft and Lovecraft criticism (1981). His most recent work is a *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (1982). He has just completed a collection of his *Essays on H. P. Lovecraft*.

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# MORE CHAIN LIGHTNING

by H. P. Lovecraft



f the various outside activities of our United members, none is more deserving of sincere commendation and respect than the campaign for temperance and reform now being conducted by Mr. Andrew Francis Lockhart of Milbank, S. D. His little professional magazine, *Chain Lightning*, last April succeeded in ridding the city of Milbank of its licenced saloons, and in securing the conviction of illicit retailers and resort proprietors. Not even a dastardly and cowardly physical assault from behind his back, committed in the office of *The Milbank News* by a disreputable fellow whom Mr. Lockhart had exposed, has deterred our fearless amateur associate from his noble and necessary work. Since most United members have probably seen *Chain Lightning*, it appears rather extraordinary that the amateur papers have made so little endeavour to assist in combating the menace of strong drink and kindred evils; wherefore the writer feels constrained to urge some concerted action by our publishers in supporting Mr. Lockhart's campaign for decency, and in attacking any remaining phases of the liquor problem which *Chain Lightning* has not yet struck.

Chief among these hitherto neglected phases is one for which the professional press is largely to blame, and which, therefore, the amateur press can oppose with a particularly poetic justice: the advertising of beer and whiskey, and especially that disgustingly insidious type of advertising which deliberately seeks to create a false *moral sentiment* in favour of drink, at the same time placing the prohibitionists in the light of tyrannical meddlers.

A notorious beer-brewing corporation of St. Louis, sustained by an enormous capital which extends high into the millions, and therefore capable of buying the servile sentiment of the prostituted press, has during the past few months been issuing a series of infamous advertisements which constitute an insult to the greatest men this nation ever produced, and which for its pernicious tendencies should have been suppressed at its very inception. The general plan of this contemptible series is to present a brief biography of some eminent American statesman such as Washington, Jefferson, Carroll, or Morris, who lived before science had demonstrated the overwhelmingly deleterious properties of alcoholic beverages, and therefore before the moral necessity of total abstinence was emphasised. After justly lauding the virtues of each statesman, the scheming biographer mentions the fact, of course inevitable on account of the early period, that the subject of the essay was a moderate drinker of liquor, and, now departing utterly from reasonable

probability, asserts that "if the great man were living today, he would be opposed to prohibition, which limits the rights of the individual" (etc., etc., ad nauseam). What comment is necessary upon such a fl grant abuse of the liberty of the press? This series, entitled "Framers of the Constitution", is published in practically every current American daily, reaching and tainting the primitive mind of the labourer, and perverting the impressionable intellect of the child. It is poison of the vilest kind, distributed for hire by supposedly respectable newspapers, including those of the very highest class, such as the *Providence Daily Journal* and *Evening Bulletin*. The intelligent reader can discern with ease the despicable hypocrisy and falsity of these miserable advertisements. He realises keenly the fact that our serious, virtuous forefathers would have been not only participators, but active leaders in the temperance movement, had it existed in their time. As to the "personal liberty", "rights of man", and other popular phrases similarly misused, there are few indeed who can fail to perceive that the "liberty" and "right" of a man voluntarily to transform himself to a beast, and in the end to degrade himself and his descendants permanently in the scale of evolution, is equivalent to his "liberty" and "right" to rob and murder at will. If the law may justly suppress theft and homicide, it may certainly with equal justice suppress the manufacture, sale, and consumption of that liquid evil which incites most of the world's theft and homicide. As to "moderate drinking", we might on similar ethics condone "moderate larceny" or "moderate manslaughter". Human nature admits of no exact middle course in drinking. He who usually drinks "a little", will always on occasions drink "a little too much", wherefore the only sane course is absolutely total abstinence. The practical difficulty in enforcing Prohibition is admittedly great, but no man of virtue can do otherwise than work toward the final downfall of Rum. To distinguish between beer and ardent spirits is to quibble. The poison is different only in degree, and the use of the one inevitably encourages the use of the other.

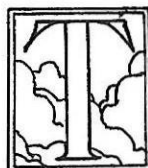
But though these facts are perfectly evident to the enlightened reader, they are but vaguely comprehended by the masses, who therefore fall an easy prey to the alluring advertisements of the brewer and distiller. Such evil propaganda deserves no place in modern civilisation, though it perhaps reveals to the prohibitionist the essential unnaturalness of the craving for drink, and the increasing power of reform: the advertisements are obviously designed both to arouse the liquorish desires of the public, and to nullify the good effect of prohibition work.

As Mr. Lockhart has regretfully asserted in a letter to the writer, a moral or legal appeal to the wealthy brewing class would be fruitless. Dulled in the first place to ethical impressions, their tainted money protects them from the law. The professional press, therefore, is the vulnerable spot, and the logical point for our attacks. No method should be spared to decrease the circulation and popularity of every journal, high or low in its cultural appeal, which sells itself and its pages to the demon Rum. Remonstrant letters



# LOVECRAFT IN THE FOREIGN PRESS, 1971-1982

by S. T. Joshi



he 1970s was the decade of Lovecraft's most extensive exposure in the foreign press, for only French and, to a lesser degree, German and Spanish translations of Lovecraft's work were copious before 1970. What is more, before 1970 no collections of tales by Lovecraft had appeared in Japanese or the Scandinavian languages, and only two in Dutch; since 1970 all these countries have issued Lovecraft's work extensively in book form. It will perhaps be most convenient to study Lovecraft's foreign diffusion by individual language.

In sheer quantity the Spanish have been far in the lead, and have issued no fewer than sixteen volumes by eight different publishers since 1971; four separate collections were published in 1974 alone.<sup>1</sup> Many of these are merely popular editions equivalent to the American Ballantine or British Panther editions (and these figures do not include translations of the Derleth "posthumous collaborations", in some of which Lovecraft alone is listed as "author"), but some are more notable. In 1971 Rafael Llopis, the leading Spanish Lovecraftian, compiled the *Viajes al otro mundo* (Alianza Editorial; 6th ed. 1981; II-A-71),<sup>2</sup> a collection of four stories in the "Randolph Carter cycle" (excluding "The Unnamable"), with a highly intelligent and lengthy introduction. Llopis' earlier anthology, *Los mitos de Cthulhu* (Alianza, 1969; 6th ed. 1980; II-C-50), included six Lovecraft tales, among them—surprisingly—"The Doom That Came to Sarnath" and "Out of the Eons". In 1974 Eduardo Haro Ibars edited another worthy collection, *El sepulcro y otros relatos* (Ediciones Jucar; II-A-45), with another significant introduction. Barral Editores issued in 1974 a two-volume series, *Los horrores de Dunwich* and *La sombra más allá del tiempo* (II-A-42, 43), containing the majority of Lovecraft's lengthier Mythos tales. Finally, Spain followed France and Italy in issuing Lovecraft's revisions in two volumes (Luis de Caralt, 1978; II-A-57, 58).

The important French translations of Lovecraft had begun to appear so early as 1954, and continued through the 1960s; so that by 1970 only a few works remained to be translated. Bernard Da Costa produced an excellent

<sup>1</sup>Three recent Spanish collections not listed in my bibliography of Lovecraft (Kent State University Press, 1981) are *En la cripta* (1980), *El horror de Dunwich* (1980), and *El caso de Charles Dexter Ward* (1981), all from Alianza Editorial.

<sup>2</sup>The code number refers to the item number of the work in my bibliography (see note above), where the reader may find full bibliographic information.

translation (with brief commentary) of *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (Bourgois, 1971; II-A-27), far superior to the Bergier-Truchaud translation of 1969 (II-A-21). In 1975 appeared the curious volume, *Lettres d'Arkham* (Glénat; II-A-46), edited by Yves Rivière. This book (which Christian Bourgois once described to me as a "petit scandale") consists of tiny excerpts of letters by Lovecraft derived from the first two volumes of the *Selected Letters*; dates of writing and addressees are almost never identified, but instead the excerpts are arranged by subject-matter. This was not the first time Lovecraft's letters had been translated into French (the *L'Herne* Lovecraft issue of 1969 had included some), but it represented—however disreputably—the first book appearance of Lovecraft's letters in translation. Shortly thereafter Francis Lacassin, a leading Lovecraft scholar, undertook to produce a much more distinguished translation, and the first of a projected three-volume series of *Lettres* (Bourgois) emerged in 1978 (II-A-59). To this volume—again a selection from the first two volumes of the *Selected Letters*—the highest praise must be given, for it may still be the best annotated edition of Lovecraft produced in any language. Lacassin's notes to the letters are highly intelligent, and the formidable job of translating Lovecraft's idiosyncratic epistolary style was entrusted to the capable hands of the late Jacques Parsons. It is perhaps Parsons' death that has delayed the appearance of the second volume (although I have heard that the first was not, surprisingly, a financial success), which was announced for late 1981. The French had also led the way in translating Lovecraft's revisions in two volumes (Bourgois, 1975; II-A-47, 48), and have been the first to translate Lovecraft's poetry—"The Ancient Track" and "Psychopompos" by France-Marie Watkins (into French verse; II-C-70, 71) and the entire *Fungi from Yuggoth* (into prose) in the journal *Ides . . . et Autres* (1978; II-B-iii-1).

The opening of the 1970s saw the distinguished German hardcover firm of Insel Verlag continuing its translations of Lovecraft's work for its Bibliothek des Hauses Usher series; five exquisitely produced volumes were issued between 1968 and 1973, and all have been reprinted in paperback by Suhrkamp. Only recently have some of Lovecraft's lesser work appeared in German: *Die Katzen von Ulthar*, ed. Kalju Kirde (Suhrkamp, 1980), including the "dream-world" tales (which, interestingly, were among the first to be translated into French), and *Die Traumfahrt zum unbekannten Kadath* (Stuttgart: Hobbit Press, 1980). Recently Franz Rottensteiner has come to the fore and edited two collections, *In der Gruft und andere makabre Erzählungen* (Suhrkamp, 1982), and *Der Schatten aus der Zeit: Geschichten kosmischen Grauens aus dem Cthulhu-Mythos* (1982), which is one of the very few hardcover editions ever issued by Suhrkamp. The Germans have yet to issue Lovecraft's revisions (although Rottensteiner has just informed me of plans to do so), but—aside from an astonishingly wide representation in anthologies, including not only many translations of Peter Haining's and Michel Parry's anthologies but such distinguished volumes as Manfred Kluge's *Die besten Gespenstergeschichten aus aller Welt* (1976; II-C-42), and Christian Brandstätter's *Phantastica* (II-C-3), which included "The Music of Erich Zann" as part of *Eine Hommage für E. T. A. Hoffmann*—plans to issue a 12-volume



edition of Lovecraft's letters (presumably a complete translation of the *Selected Letters*) were announced in 1975 by Verlag Claus Neugebauer.<sup>3</sup> Although a prospectus to the project was issued, it ultimately fell through from insufficient finances. It would certainly have been a worthy venture in a land which regards Lovecraft not merely as a consummate literary artist but a significant thinker as well.

Italian book publication of Lovecraft's work has been dominated by two firms, Sugar Editore in Milan and Fanucci Editore in Rome. Sugar had been the prime force in Lovecraft publishing before 1970, and in 1973 capped its efforts with the massive 939-page *Opere Complete* (rpt. 1978; II-A-35), including nearly all Lovecraft's fiction plus *Supernatural Horror in Literature*; it has, however, recently been revealed that the translation of many items was erroneous, and that frequent abridgements were made in the texts. Without these blemishes this volume would have been a landmark in Lovecraftian publishing history. Fanucci has now taken the lead by issuing Lovecraft's revisions in two volumes, *Nelle spire di Medusa* (1976; II-A-51) and *Sfida dall'Infinito* (1976; II-A-52), under the editorship of the leading Italian Lovecraft scholars, Gianfranco de Turris and Sebastiano Fusco. These volumes are, however, not merely translations of the American *Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* (as are the corresponding French and Spanish editions), but innovative and imaginative volumes incorporating the recentest advances in Lovecraft criticism (both volumes received much assistance from Dirk W. Mosig); *Sfida dall'Infinito* includes such items as "The Challenge from Beyond", "Collapsing Cosmoses", and the first republication of "The Night Ocean", the Lovecraft-Barlow collaboration discovered by Mosig. Also included were memoirs of Lovecraft by E. Hoffmann Price, R. H. Barlow, Wilfred B. Talman, and Kenneth Sterling—so that the volume is rather like some of the Arkham House miscellanies, *Marginalia* or *The Shuttered Room*. Finally, de Turris and Fusco edited *I miti di Cthulhu* (Fanucci, 1975; II-C-13), essentially a translation of Derleth's *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* but including much other matter, including the first Italian appearance of letters by Lovecraft. Fanucci was planning several other volumes in the late 1970s—including a collection of Lovecraft's essays (whose appearance would be a real landmark in the foreign press) and a translation of my own *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*; but financial difficulties have not allowed them to carry out the plans.

Recent Dutch appearances may be noted, although, as with the French and German, they are merely offering works by Lovecraft not yet available in the language. The three novels were published in separate editions by A. W. Bruna (1972-74; II-A-30, 33, 40), and they were followed by a collection of short stories in 1976, *Het huis in de nevel* (II-A-53).

The 1970s saw the first book appearances of Lovecraft's work in the Scandinavian languages, although some anthology appearances had occurred

<sup>3</sup>This firm also announced another volume, *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Materialien zu seinem Leben und Werk*, ed. Hans Joachim Alpers, for late 1975; but this also never appeared.

as early as 1955 (see II-C-37, 38). In Sweden a collection of short tales appeared in 1973, *Skräckens labyrinter* (Askild & Kärnekull; II-A-36), and in 1975 Delta Förlags issued *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (II-A-49) under the odd title *Gengångaren* ("Ghost Story"). The latter, however, appeared in a distinguished series of fantasy classics, *Skräckens klassiker*. Sam J. Lundwall, who edited the former volume, also issued the notable anthology, *Den fantastika Romanen: Gotisk Skräkkromantik från Horace Walpole till H. P. Lovecraft* (1973; II-C-58), which reveals how Lovecraft is coming to be regarded as one end of a literary epoch, as Jacques Finné also noted in his anthology, *L'Amerique fantastique de Poe à Lovecraft* (1973; II-C-20). In Norwegian a single volume has appeared, *Tingen på terskelen* (1973; II-A-37), a collection of tales edited by Øyvind Myhre and Einar Engstad.

The most phenomenal foreign response of the decade has been the Japanese; for, although Lovecraft had appeared sporadically in periodicals and anthologies since as early as the late 1940s, no book of his work was issued until the *Lovecraft Kessakushu* (Sodosha) of 1973 (II-A-31). This volume included not merely stories and an abridgement of *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, but 50 pages of biographical and critical commentary by Katsuo Jinka and Hiroshi Aramata. This was followed by two separate volumes of *Lovecraft Kessakushu* from Sogensha (1974, 1976 [second volume rpt. 1982]; II-A-39, 54), edited respectively by Tadaaki Onishi and Toshiyasu Uno. Between them appeared the remarkable *Lovecraft Zenshu I* (Sodosha, 1975; II-A-50), an exquisite hardbound and slipcased edition including the shorter tales, Leiber's "Literary Copernicus", an autobiographical letter by Lovecraft, and extensive commentary by Aramata. This was the first of a projected five-volume Collection of H. P. Lovecraft's Fiction, being the first of two volumes of short fiction; the next volume to be published, *Lovecraft Zenshu IV* (Sodosha, 1978; II-A-60), is actually the second volume of the longer tales, and also contains Leiber's "Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin" and commentary by Aramata. This latter volume is especially noteworthy for including reproductions of some of Nicholas Roerich's paintings, alluded to in *At the Mountains of Madness*. These distinguished slipcased editions testify to the high reputation of Lovecraft in Japan—a reputation which may not be forthcoming in his own language for some years.

Some note may in conclusion be made about foreign periodicals which feature Lovecraft's work. Many of these are not much higher than the "fan" level—*Ganymed Horror* and *Weird Fiction Times* (German), *Drab and Rigel* (Dutch), *Crypt Horror Tales* and *Genso to Kaiki* (Japanese)—while others correspond to the American science-fiction magazines: *Nueva Dimensión* (Spanish) and *Hayakawa's Mystery Magazine* (Japanese). The German *Quarber Merkur*, however, although not professionally published, is a distinguished and scholarly journal which features frequent reviews of Lovecraft's work. Similar, although on slightly lower a level, is the Italian *Il Re in Giallo*. Since Lovecraft's appearance in *L'Herne* and *Fiction* in the late 1960s, he seems to have dropped out of the French periodical press—probably because nearly all his fiction is now available in book form. It ought finally to be noted that books by Lovecraft regularly receive lengthy reviews in the most prestigious foreign newspapers and magazines—*Süddeutsche Zeitung*,



*Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Die Zeit*, *National Zeitung*, *Die Welt der Literatur* in German; *Fiction*, *La Quinzaine Littéraire* in French; *G sera*, *Il Tempo*, *Paese Sera*, *Roma*, *La Repubblica* in Italian—a far cry from his near-total neglect by American or English periodicals. In general there can be no question but that Lovecraft is far more highly regarded abroad than here—as was startlingly proven by the great International Lovecraft Symposium in Trieste in June 1977—for the simple reason that foreign criticism draws no distinction between great work in the fantasy field and great work in other genres of literature. For a great many reasons Americans find it difficult to regard fantasy as serious literature; and, although the recent burgeoning of fantasy criticism and in particular criticism of Lovecraft may help to change that attitude, it shall be long before the barrier is definitively overcome.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>My thanks to Dirk W. Mosig, Masaki Abe, Franz Rottensteiner, and especially John H. Stanley for assistance in the researching of this paper.

*Continued from p. 31*

to some of the less offensive of these papers might serve well as a beginning, whilst every amateur publisher should be willing to give space to the intelligent denunciation of the liquor interests. Extra copies of these amateur journals, judiciously distributed to professional editors who tolerate advertisements of whiskey and beer, might do more good than the majority now believe.

Print and publicity, declares Mr. Lockhart, are the only effective weapons against corruption, wherefore the members of the United may find in temperance work a splendid opportunity to demonstrate their energy and ability.

*Continued from p. 40*

The final essay, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction", concisely sets forth Lovecraft's methods of composition, providing guidelines for story writing that are no less applicable today than they were when Lovecraft drew them up in the early thirties (not that he ever, as he admits, strictly adhered to them). In the opening paragraph he succinctly expounds the reasons why he writes such fiction.

At the close of his introduction Mr. Joshi evokes the possibility that future generations will "mention Lovecraft in the same breath as Voltaire, Nietzsche, and Bertrand Russell". As Lovecraft's contemporary Ernest Hemingway once put it, "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

# REVIEWS

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre*. Introduction by Robert Bloch. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982. 375 pp. \$6.95 pb. Reviewed by David E. Schultz.

With the eventual publication of *The Collected Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, the Lovecraft oeuvre, which includes many items previously unpublished, long out of print, limited to small printings, or available only in obscure publications, will become accessible to all students and admirers of Lovecraft and his works, but will admittedly be beyond the interest and probably the pocketbook of the general reader. A suitable one-volume collection of Lovecraft's greatest stories would serve the needs of potentially interested readers that are not Lovecraft fanatics.

S. T. Joshi's review of the six recently reprinted Lovecraft pocketbooks from Ballantine (see *Lovecraft Studies*, Spring 1982) noted that those titles were hardly representative of Lovecraft's best work or useful to the average reader. He noted there was a "dim hope that Ballantine will allow the publication of a single-volume omnibus of Lovecraft's really great fiction, perhaps with authentic and unadulterated texts, in the near future."

The near future has come to pass, perhaps sooner than expected, and the appearance of *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* from Ballantine would seem to be the fortuitous answer to Joshi's plea. But this book is another "mixed blessing", possibly more disappointing than the previous six books. For every blessing, there seem to be two accompanying curses. The melodramatic subtitle of the book could have been strengthened enormously by the elimination of the word *bloodcurdling*. Many important stories that have been unavailable in paper since the last printings of *The Colour out of Space* and *Others* and *The Dunwich Horror and Others*—stories that belong in any collection of the essential Lovecraft—are once again obtainable in this volume. They include "The Colour out of Space", "The Shadow out of Time", "The Dunwich Horror", "The Call of Cthulhu", and "The Whisperer in Darkness". Yet *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* contains four stories already available in three of the Ballantine pocketbooks ("The Silver Key", "The Dreams in the Witch House", "The Shadow over Innsmouth", and "The Outsider") and omits "Cool Air" and "The Terrible Old Man", admittedly minor tales but nevertheless unavailable.

There have been many collections of Lovecraft's stories in the past forty-five years, several claiming to contain Lovecraft's "best" stories, but none representing Lovecraft's proposed contents for a volume of his stories. Certainly no two persons would agree as to what Lovecraft's best stories are, but it is hard to imagine that anyone would rank "The Picture in the House" and "In the Vault" among them. Since repetition of pieces from the other Ballantine books was apparently not considered a problem in the selection of the contents of the new omnibus, presumably the limitations of length, size and printing costs prevailed over quality in the omission



of *At the Mountains of Madness* or *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. The editor of this volume is not known, but it seems that the shade of August Derleth (who has inexplicably copyrighted the contents of this volume, in 1963 no less) had a hand in the story selection since the book's contents rather closely match those of Arkham House's *The Dunwich Horror and Others: The Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft*. The arrangement of the titles is haphazard, with no organization by either chronology or theme.

Joshi optimistically stated in his Lovecraft bibliography that "a new generation of scholars . . . is finally beginning to brush away some of the cobwebs enshrouding Lovecraft's oeuvre; but that a long road must still be travelled, all realize." Indeed it must, for despite the enormous advances made in Lovecraft scholarship within the last decade alone, the well-intentioned but nevertheless misguided efforts of the first generation of Lovecraft's champions still prevail. *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* cannot boast the "authentic and unadulterated" texts that might have been used were the publisher interested in such trifles. The texts of the stories perpetuate many long-standing errors, and sadly, they now bear additional lapses. The aficionado will be pleased to see the restoration of the "Francis Wayland Thurston" footnote in "The Call of Cthulhu" (presumably owing to its restoration in the fifth printing of *The Dunwich Horror*) but will be disappointed to note the half of a paragraph dropped from "The Silver Key" along with many other errors.

It must be admitted that the persistent hyphen in "The Dreams in the Witch House" will be cause for head-wagging only among the readers of *Lovecraft Studies*. Such a concern, though legitimate from the standpoint of scholarship, is of small consequence to the world at large, and so *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* must be judged by other criteria. The book is certainly a worthwhile introduction to the new Lovecraft reader. The general selection of stories, the trade paperback format and the price all make the book an attractive addition to anyone's library, but the seasoned Lovecraftian may also gain something from the book.

The introduction by Robert Bloch is a refreshing change from the usual tripe served by less capable writers, and for that reason the book may be preferable to *The Dunwich Horror*. Bloch, one of Lovecraft's many young protégés in the 1930s, presents a sympathetic and understanding portrait without the adulation usually found in such a characterization. He downplays or explodes many of the myths about Lovecraft, so the first-time reader will be spared the clichés with which Lovecraftians are only too familiar. Lovecraft is referred to as "the New England gentleman" instead of the "sickly recluse". The sparingly used term "Cthulhu mythos" is always bracketed in quotation marks, indicating that it may be widely used but is not widely accepted since it is not of Lovecraft's invention and ill describes a handful of his stories.

There are a few points with which one might disagree with Bloch, with regard to facts and to matters of interpretation. "The Shadow over Innsmouth" is hardly a story about "dirty old men". The fact that Lovecraft did not die of Bright's disease has been documented. And the lengthy defense of Lovecraft and other writers from the appellation "sick" makes one suspect

that perhaps Bloch protests too much. Avoiding such charges altogether in deference to a more positive analysis of Lovecraft's writing might have better served him. But these are minor points. Bloch's witty, warm survey of Lovecraft's life and the resurgence of interest in the terror tale will serve to introduce any neophyte to the dreamer from Providence. It is hoped that *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* will serve to bring Lovecraft the greater recognition he deserves, and that increased interest will accelerate the publication of his *Collected Works*.

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *Uncollected Prose and Poetry 3*. Edited by S. T. Joshi and Marc A. Michaud. West Warwick, R.I.: Necronomicon Press, 1982. 44 pp. \$4.95 pb. Reviewed by Peter Cannon.

Messrs. Joshi and Michaud in this third volume of uncollected prose and poetry have once again assembled a varied literary assortment that should please those devotees for whom every word from H. P. Lovecraft's pen is of fascination. While all the prose pieces and poems here are worth preserving in a specialized collection of this sort, one does get the sense that the vein of obscure Lovecraft material is beginning to run a little thin. (Would that the messy copyright business were cleared up and the editors permitted to prepare a collection of *unpublished* Lovecraft material!) But if on the whole the present volume is slimmer and less substantial than its two predecessors, it is no less ably edited: Mr. Joshi provides just the right amount of pertinent background information in his introduction and in the notes to the individual works.

The fiction section begins with the so-called Discarded Draft of "The Shadow over Innsmouth". As the editors explain, it actually represents pieces of the second or third draft of the story, preserved by chance when Lovecraft used the reverse sides of the sheets for the final handwritten manuscript. The first fragment, the longest, shows the opening at an early, less developed stage. Here the narrator speaks of reading in the paper about "a sweeping fire" destroying Innsmouth, the result, apparently, of an act of arson rather than deliberate action by government authorities. (When Lovecraft thought to locate Zadok Allen at the firehouse did he originally intend a subtle foreshadowing of this incendiary disaster? In the event, it is no surprise that the decadent Innsmouth fire brigade would have proven utterly inadequate in fighting such a conflagration.) The second fragment gives a tantalizing glimpse of a visit the narrator makes to the Marsh retail office, a scene excised from the final version, while the third and last fragment depicts the narrator's meeting at the fire station with "Uncle Zadok", an earlier name for the character Zadok Allen.

In their presentation of "The Battle That Ended the Century", the playful spoof written by Robert Barlow and revised by Lovecraft, the editors reveal the degree to which Lovecraft scholarship has advanced since its appearance in *Something about Cats* (1949). They have consulted the typed manu-



script (the existence of which August Derleth was ignorant) in the John Hay Library, and have supplied fuller annotations to the parodic names. In the fifth note, however, they lapse in not identifying Dr. David H. Keller as other than "apparently a real doctor". In fact, as they should have mentioned, Dr. Keller wrote science fiction and was the author of the controversial essay, "Shadows over Lovecraft".

The five poems, being all rather undistinguished in themselves and thus representative of the average of Lovecraft's poetic output, are mainly interesting for their philosophical content. "Earth and Sky" and "On Religion" champion science over superstition and religion. "Hellas" is a banal ode to ancient Greece.

The voice of "To an Infant" exhorts a metaphorically winged new-born to value his dreams in the certain struggle against the gods of fate—or something like that. In the third line—"They have envied your wings dilated, headless of age or clime,"—"headless" appears to be an error for "heedless". (No doubt Lovecraft would have considered "headless" wings as anatomically grotesque as the "laurel leaves sprouting from the brow" image for which he once gently chided a fellow amateur.) That such a mistake should have been overlooked—indeed, it is reinforced by S. Thomas Brown's very fine cover illustration showing two decapitated angel statues flanking a tomb—is perhaps indicative of the weakness of the poem, with its curious and over-colored imagery bordering on the laughable.

"Festival", in contrast to the classical style of the other poems, follows in the Poe mold. It has been commonly known in its abridged form as "Yule Horror". The editors have attached the fourth and final stanza, which has been left off in all previous appearances owing to its personal address to Farnsworth Wright to whom Lovecraft sent it as a Christmas poem.

The two autobiographical essays, "The Brief Autobiography of an Inconsequential Scribbler" and "What Amateurism and I Have Done for Each Other", after the poetry come as a relief in their clear and unaffected, if formal, diction. With characteristic modesty and wit Lovecraft writes of his appreciation of amateur journalism. From these one can imagine how Lovecraft came to be such a big frog in the little pond of the amateur movement—surely few of his colleagues were capable of matching the high standards of his prose.

Editor Joshi declares "Cats and Dogs", wherein Lovecraft argues in mock scholarly fashion for the superiority of cats to dogs, to be "one of the most delightful essays ever penned by Lovecraft". While not denying its charm, one may find the long paragraphs verging towards the tedious. Too, Lovecraft's more elitist pronouncements, however playfully presented, are disturbingly reminiscent of some of his more serious racist statements. The editors are to be admired for their honesty in reproducing Lovecraft's original text, complete with disparaging distinction made between "human beings" and "negroes" at the start of the second paragraph (p. 30). More typical restorations include references to James Ferdinand Morton, Frank Long, and Mrs. Minter, placing it back in the context of a piece written specifically for a debate going on in the Blue Pencil Club after Lovecraft's departure from New York. "Allson" (p. 37) ought to read "Allston", the Boston suburb where Mrs. Minter at one time resided.

*Continued on p. 36*





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